# Chapter 2
# THE HANDBOOK

The goal of this handbook is to promote standardized maintenance of accurate and complete data about individual school staff members and others involved in the provision of educational services to children. This handbook identifies terms that can be used to describe the background, qualifications, responsibilities, and performance of different types of educators and support staff, including teachers, administrators, support service staff, contractors, and volunteers.

The Handbook contains a set of terms and definitions that can be used at all levels of the education system, including early childhood education centers and elementary and secondary schools and districts; in all types of education organizations, including public schools, private schools, and schools run by private management companies; and by district, diocesan, regional, state, and federal education agencies. If staff data are collected and maintained according to standard definitions at the lowest level (the school or school district), data can be aggregated more easily to higher levels with the assurance that the data are comparable from individual to individual, from site to site, and from year to year. This will aid in looking at patterns of staffing over time and predicting staffing needs in the future.

Background information is usually collected when an individual is hired for the first time by a school, a school district, or other education organization. Much of this information (such as date and place of birth) will not change over the course of the staff member's career. This type of information should only be collected once, and it should become a part of the individual's permanent record. Additional paperwork should be necessary only if a change occurs (for example, a home address may change). Other types of information accumulate and change over the course of a staff member's career and need to be added to the record as appropriate. This type of information might include assignments, career development, and salary increases.

For the purpose of this handbook, a "staff member" is defined as an individual who performs specified activities for any public or private education institution or agency that provides instructional or support services to students or staff, at the early childhood through high school completion levels. A staff member may be:

- An "employee" who performs services under the direction of the employing institution or agency, is compensated for such services by the employer, and is eligible for employee benefits and wage or salary tax withholdings

- A "contractor" or "consultant" who performs services for an agreed-upon fee, or an employee of a management service contracted to work on site

- A "volunteer" who performs services on a voluntary and unpaid basis

- An in-kind service provider whose salary and/or expenses are paid by someone else, such as services provided by a partner or organization.

- An independent businessperson or contractor working at a school site

## Purposes and Scope of the Handbook

The purposes of this handbook are to:

1. Provide a common language that can be used to collect accurate, consistent, comparable, and complete data on staff.
2. Promote the development of policies to safeguard the confidentiality of the data and ensure appropriate use of staff data.
3. Describe how all relevant parties can maintain data in a way that promotes flexible and efficient use.

This handbook includes terms, and their definitions that can be used to collect and maintain information about individuals serving in the following types of organizations:

- Public and private education institutions and programs, including early childhood or pre-kindergarten programs; elementary, middle or junior high, and high schools; vocational-technical programs; special education programs; and adult high schools

- All types of education organizations, including schools, school districts/local education agencies, intermediate education units, education service districts, and state and federal education agencies

This handbook does <u>not</u> describe a mandated data collection system or instrument; rather, it encourages the standardization of terminology use across all levels. Although the Handbook covers information related to individuals serving through the secondary education level only, many of the terms may be applied and used interchangeably with postsecondary education. For example, terms describing personal identification, educational background, or certain employment conditions could be used to maintain information about individuals (both staff and students) at various education levels.

The data elements and definitions contained in the Handbook are relevant to any staff record whether or not it is a part of a computerized database. The data elements can be used to standardize how information is collected on paper documents, as well. This handbook, however, has been organized to facilitate the design and development of an automated staff accounting system because of the maintenance and communication advantages associated with such a system.

## Common Terms and Definitions

Many different types of decisions are made by, and about staff members; consequently, many different types of data are needed. For example, education organizations must be able to prove that employees meet the requirements for the positions they hold. Certain types of standard employment information must be maintained to meet reporting requirements of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the Social Security Administration (SSA), and other governmental agencies. Education organizations must have information for payroll and other necessary administrative functions; they also maintain information about staff assignments and performance. This handbook identifies types of data that are needed by education organizations both for general recordkeeping and for making decisions about effective staffing arrangements.

The selection of specific data elements to be maintained is often facilitated by the choice of an automated staff information system. Most staffing software packages are designed to maintain the data elements required for federal reporting, payroll, salary, and benefits. These are needed by all businesses, not just education. The maintenance of data about educational background, assignment, evaluation, and professional development may not, however, be consistent among software packages; in addition, they may not be particularly attuned to the needs of education organizations. This handbook contains a comprehensive listing of data elements

important to the education system, reflecting the needs of all types of education organizations.

Within software systems, or on paper data collection forms, the potential exists for data to be maintained in a variety of formats. As people fill out forms, they may interpret questions in different ways than originally intended. For each of the data elements in this handbook, therefore, a standard definition is included, and for many data elements there are lists of unique options. The value of clearly defining how data are collected and maintained cannot be overstated. When staff data are collected and maintained consistently and accurately, the data aggregated from schools and districts will be comparable. This will make the resulting information more useful for evaluation and decision making purposes.

## Safeguarding Confidentiality and Ensuring Appropriate Use of Staff Data

Education organizations must develop policies and procedures for collecting, maintaining, using, and disposing of staff data that are appropriate for local and state needs, and conform with applicable laws and regulations. Many parts of staff records are considered "public records," subject to federal and state open records laws or the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). As a result, education organizations must establish policies and procedures for making data available to the public upon request. At the same time, each education agency should be sensitive to the privacy rights of their staff, and have policies and procedures that protect against improper use of information about individual staff members.

The National Forum on Education Statistics and NCES have released a document called *Privacy Issues in Education Staff Records* (NCES 2000-363) to help education organizations with the appropriate use and confidential maintenance of staff data. In addition, NCES has produced a document on the security of technology systems as it relates to the maintenance of administrative records systems, called *Safeguarding Your Technology* (NCES 98-297). Both documents are described later in this chapter.

## Development of Automated Staff Data Systems

Increasing numbers of education organizations are computerizing their staff records because of the many advantages of automation. Typical software packages handle payroll data, scheduling, and other necessary administrative tasks. In addition, most

automated staff information systems offer flexibility in how data can be used within the education organization. For instance, by using information from an automated staff data system that is integrated with other data systems (e.g., finance, students, facilities), administrators can analyze and evaluate a number of factors that can affect the quality of educational services provided. Administrators could look at the educational background of the teaching staff, check on the availability of appropriately trained staff, identify teachers who are doing an outstanding job of instructing students, and predict where staffing shortages will occur. Such analyses can promote more efficient and effective decision making by administrators.

This handbook is not meant to provide a design for an automated staff accounting system. Indeed, the data elements included can be used in paper as well as computer records. This handbook does, however, provide a design for coding data so that they can be stored and flexibly used in a management information system. In addition, when staff information needs to be shared within the education organization, or with other agencies and organizations, it can be done more efficiently and, in some cases, more accurately if the data are maintained in an automated system. Automated systems also offer the capacity to protect the confidentiality of individual records by making data available only to those with a clear need to have access.

## Background of the Handbook

This handbook is one of a series of handbooks that provide guidance to education organizations on various different types of education data. This edition was developed with the assistance of many representatives of federal, state and local education agencies over the course of a year. The terms, definitions, and procedures recommended represent the combined best judgment of many experts participating in the cooperative development of the handbook series. They are presented as sound practices or principles to be interpreted and applied according to the identified needs and requirements of any education organization.

### NCES Handbooks and Other Guides

NCES has sponsored the revision of several handbooks that were a part of a series of terminology manuals called the *State Educational Records and Reports Series*, originally published between 1953 and 1974. These handbooks provide essential guidance about the importance of comparable and complete data collected by school districts and state education agencies including data reported to the federal government each year. The handbooks reflect the growing importance of consolidated education data systems that allow different types of information to be brought together to improve education decision making.

- Last published in 1995, the *Staff Data Handbook: Elementary, Secondary and Early Childhood Education* is a revision of the document *Staff Accounting: Classifications and Standard Terminology for Local and State School Systems* (Handbook IV), originally published in 1965. Much of the earlier information has been included here; however many new data elements have been added, reflecting increased accountability requirements, new types of professional development, and payroll information.

- A new version of the *Student Data Handbook: Elementary, Secondary and Early Childhood Education* (NCES 2000-343)[1] was published in 2000. Previously called Handbook V, *Standard Terminology and Guide for Managing Student Data in Elementary and Secondary Schools, Community/Junior Colleges, and Adult Education*, this handbook was originally published in 1974 and revised in 1994, when its title was changed. This handbook provides a comprehensive listing of data elements that could be collected about students in schools, districts, or state education agencies. Many of the data elements are identical to the ones in the *Staff Data Handbook*. Appendix C lists the numbers of the identical data elements.

- Another handbook in the series is *Financial Accounting for Local and State School Systems* (Handbook II) (NCES 97-096R)[2], last revised in 1990. Another revision is under way. This handbook covers basic concepts for financial management, which is relevant to staff data because, among other reasons, effective use of financial and human resources is essential to running education organizations.

Since 1995, NCES has published several other documents that support the automation and standardization of data collection.
- Based on discussions related to the Student Data Handbook and the SPEEDE/ExPRESS student transcript format (described in more detail later

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[1] **http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/studenthb**
[2] **http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=97096R**

in this chapter), a need for a standard course classification system was identified. To meet this need, in 1995 NCES published *A Pilot Standard National Course Classification System for Secondary Education* (NCES 95-480)[3]. Plans are under discussion to revise this document once the new student and staff data handbooks are complete. This handbook provides codes to link student and staff data, which can help education organizations answer questions about the provision of comparable courses across and within states. These codes can also be used to analyze teacher qualifications for particular courses.

- In June 1997, the National Forum on Education Statistics published *Basic Data Elements for Elementary and Secondary Education Information Systems* (NCES 97-531)[4]. This document describes the data element building blocks for an education information system. Based on the contents of the Student Data Handbook and the Staff Data Handbook, this document provides guidance to education staff responsible for developing a flexible and useful data system.

- *Protecting the Privacy of Student Records: Guidelines for Education Agencies* (NCES 97-527)[5], written for the National Forum on Education Statistics and NCES, provides guidance regarding the safety and security of student records. This document focuses on practical procedures and policies to support strict control and appropriate release of student records, an issue that raised concerns during the development of the *Student Data Handbook*.

- *Technology @ Your Fingertips* (NCES 98-293)[6] was developed by NCES to provide guidance on the selection and implementation of administrative and instructional technology. This document contains guidelines, checklists, and case studies to help schools, districts, state education agencies, and postsecondary education institutions make effective technology decisions.

- Another document, *Safeguarding Your Technology* (NCES 98-297)[7], focuses on technology equipment security, which is essential when maintaining automated records. Like *Technology @ Your Fingertips*, this

document includes guidelines, checklists, and case studies to assist staff from schools, districts, and state education agencies; and others responsible for planning, designing, and maintaining technology.

- *Privacy Issues in Education Staff Records* (NCES 2000-324)[8] discusses key concepts in protecting and managing staff records. It does not provide legal guidelines, but does address requirements of the federal Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts; and it offers principles of best practice.

- *Building an Automated Student Record System* (NCES 2000-324)[9] is a guide for local and state education agencies designing or upgrading an automated student information system. Guidelines, checklists, and real-life examples are included.

NCES also has participated in the development of formats for electronic record exchange of student and staff records through the American National Standards Institute's Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) subcommittee. The student record format is called SPEEDE/ExPRESS. SPEEDE stands for Standardization of Postsecondary Education Electronic Data Exchange, and ExPRESS stands for Exchange of Permanent Records Electronically for Students and Schools. (A personnel record format is currently under development.) Information on the education EDI standards can be obtained at **http://www.standardscouncil.org**.

## Handbook Revision Process

Beginning in 1998, the Administrative Records Development Project of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), under contract to NCES and with the assistance of Evaluation Software Publishing, Inc. as subcontractors, began anew the process of revising and updating the student and staff data handbooks. As before, recommendations were sought from local, state, and federal education agency staff concerning needed changes and proposed new data elements. A working group was convened in March 2000 to review potential revisions and make additional suggestions. In addition, a federal working group consisting of individuals from the U.S. Department of Education was convened in May 2000 to provide input on changes in federal reporting requirements. Potential revisions were shared with many groups of education representatives, as well as with individuals who volunteered to review the new

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[3]**http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=95480**
[4]**http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=97531**
[5] **http://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/P97527**
[6] **http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/tech**
[7] **http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/safetech**

[8]**http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2000363**
[9]**http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2000324**

edition. Those who participated in the revision of this handbook are named in appendix A. Final revisions were submitted to NCES in Fall 2000, for publication in early 2001. A new process for continually revising the Handbook is described in detail later in this chapter. Annual changes will be finalized in January of each year and published on the NCES Web page. In addition, revised pages will be printed to accompany the printed document.

## Electronic Handbook

A Web-based version of this handbook is available at **http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/staffhb**. The online version of the *Staff Data Handbook* was created to allow a more "interactive" way to use the contents. A "List of Staff Data Elements" and an "Alphabetical Subject Area Index" allow the reader to move around to the data elements of interest. The online version also includes some direct links to references, which allows for updated information. The data element content is the same as in the currently available printed version. The chapters of the printed version are also included, and the on-screen "Table of Contents" can be used to review them. The electronic Handbook can be viewed through most browsers, and can be easily downloaded to the reader's printer or desktop.

## Criteria for Including Items in the Handbook

Three basic criteria—data usefulness, effort to collect, and reporting requirements—were used in selecting data elements. Each data element included was judged according to the following criteria:

1.  The data element is important and needed by many schools, school districts, or state education agencies to maintain vital information about staff background, qualifications, assignments, and evaluations.

2.  The effort involved in accurately collecting and maintaining the data element is justifiable in terms of the value of the information.

3.  The data element is needed for reporting information about staff to school districts or other administrative units, to state education agencies, to the federal government, and/or to parents or other constituencies in the community.

These or similar criteria may be helpful to state and local agencies and other education organizations, both public and private, in selecting items from this handbook.

One type of information that was considered but not included is a listing of references to federal surveys. Most federal education surveys ask that schools, school districts, or state education agencies report aggregate information about staff. However, a few federal sample surveys collect information about individual staff members. A listing of which individual staff-level data elements are collected in these federal surveys was omitted for two reasons. One is that the levels (staff, school, school district, and state) at which the information is collected varies from survey to survey, and it would be difficult to ensure a clear distinction of the appropriate level for each data element. A second reason is that this handbook is meant to represent "best practice" that is not expected to change for many years, while federal surveys can change from year to year or even between cycles. Data collectors, data users, and the public may, nevertheless, need to know which data specific surveys collect. Plans are underway to develop lists of these data elements in an electronic format through the United States Department of Education's electronic network.

## Sources of Definitions

The definitions included for categories, data elements, options, and entities were taken primarily from existing sources; others were written with the assistance of participants in the development process. In some instances, laws or federal regulations specified what data elements should be used and how they should be defined. Some of the definitions were included in the previous Handbook and are still in common usage. Other definitions came from a variety of published sources, such as textbooks, federal publications, or other documents. For certain elements, comparisons were made among various local, state and federal sources, and a compromise definition was developed.

Most of the options lists were drawn from existing sources. Some were obtained through the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), others were included in the Student Data Handbook.

# Basic Definitions

Several terms are used throughout this handbook. These terms are defined here to ensure clarity when reviewing the rest of the document.

A staff member is defined here as an individual who performs specified activities for any public or private education institution or agency that provides instructional or support services to students or staff in an early childhood, elementary, or secondary educational program. Included are individuals such

as teachers; school and district administrators; special service providers; and other types of support staff, such as school bus drivers, cafeteria workers, security guards, and custodians.

The term school system is used to represent the education system as a whole, including schools, school districts and other local administrative units (such as dioceses) intermediate agencies (such as regional service centers), state education agencies, and the U.S. Department of Education. Both public and private schools are included, as are administrative agencies. The term's local education agency, local administrative unit, and school district refer to education institutions, agencies, and administrative units that exist primarily to operate schools or to contract for educational services. These units need not be coextensive with county, city, or town boundaries. They oversee the functioning of schools within specific boundaries or jurisdictions, and have instructional, administrative, and recordkeeping responsibility for students. The term education organization is used to describe any or all types of public or private education agencies, institutions, or other entities that maintain data about individuals employed in education (e.g., retirement systems, licensure commissions).

The term school is used to refer to any institution that provides preschool, elementary, and/or secondary instruction. This would include an early childhood center or preschool, a public or private school serving children in kindergarten through grade 12 (and even grade 13), a vocational or adult high school, and a school that is classified as ungraded. These schools have one or more teachers to give instruction or care, are located in one or more buildings, and have an assigned administrator.

The term researchers is used to describe those responsible for evaluating education programs, individuals conducting research activities about the status of schools and students, and others with analytical responsibilities—regardless of who is sponsoring the activities.

The term's data and information are used extensively through this handbook. Data are the raw facts about a person or other entity, such as the birthdate, a mark of "A" in a history course, or a residence address of "1234 Main Street." Information is compiled, combined, summarized, or reported data that, in context, has a significant meaning. For example, a teacher's education background and previous experience can be used as information to determine what teaching assignment they should have or the total number of teachers with licensure for the courses they teach can be derived from an individual staff accounting system.

Chapter 4 contains terms and definitions for two levels of data maintenance: entities and data elements. In this handbook, an entity is a person, place, event, object, or concept about which data can be collected. A data element is a specific bit of data that can be defined and measured. When entities and data elements are combined, new unique data elements are created. For instance, the data element "Name of Institution" is defined each time it appears, but the corresponding entity is different for each appearance (e.g., Education Institution, Credentialing Organization, or Employer).

Data elements have been arranged into categories or groups of related data elements. For example, the category "Background Information" includes personal information about an individual, including data elements such as "Social Security Number," "Race," "Ethnicity," "Sex," "Birthdate," and "Language."

For many data elements, a free-form (open-ended) description is the appropriate response when designing a data collection instrument or system. For example, the possible responses for the data element "Name of Institution" are too numerous to list and must be keyed in by the user. However, many data elements in this handbook contain options. Options are possible alternatives or coded responses for data elements. Whenever possible, this handbook attempts to include an exhaustive and mutually exclusive list of options. For example, the data element "Sex" lists two options: "Male" and "Female." In this revised version, however, new code lists have been added that may not be comprehensive. The revision process described earlier in this chapter will allow additional options to be added as necessary or appropriate.

The options presented for each data element are generally illustrative, not mandatory. Education organizations may adjust, adapt, or replace them as needed to meet their requirements. In addition, schools and school districts may wish to create an options list for data elements if no list is included in this handbook. A subset of options might, in some instances, be sufficient when designing a data system or data collection instrument. Ideally, any modification should be done in such a way that it does not conflict with the basic handbook structure. In some instances, code lists are available from other sources and are referenced for a data element. For some data elements, a more extensive list of options might be needed and obtained from another source.

There are some instances where laws or regulations specify the options listed for some data elements. For example, some options are required for federal reporting to the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education. Schools or school districts may also need to adjust their option lists to reflect the current reporting requirements as specified by revised law and regulations. Care should be taken in combining categories and data elements in individual records to ensure that data can be compared or aggregated with data or information from other sources. In some cases, examples of options are listed within a data element definition, but a comprehensive list is not included because major variations are possible due to local options or expectations. When a comprehensive list could not be developed, examples were included with the definition.

At the time of this handbook's revision, changes were being made to the way information about how the "Racial/Ethnic Group" elements will be reported to the federal government. This will obviously affect how information must be maintained by schools, districts, and states. Previously, there were five options for "Racial/Ethnic Group" used in education organizations: "American Indian or Alaskan Native," "Asian or Pacific Islander," "Black (not Hispanic)," "Hispanic," and "White (not Hispanic)." Each staff member was identified by one of these five options.

Recent work completed by the federal Office of Management and Budget requires that information about five categories of race, in addition to Hispanic ethnicity, must be recorded for all persons. Specifically, staff members should be allowed to indicate if they consider themselves to be any one or more of the following: "American Indian or Alaska Native," "Asian," "Black or African American," "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander," or "White." As a result, there will be major changes in how race and ethnicity information may be reported and maintained.

The U.S. Department of Education has not made its final recommendations on how aggregated data should be reported. For example, tabulation guidelines may allow some of the 63 possible combinations of race and ethnicity to be collapsed into broader categories. The Department of Education intends to allow education organizations three years to implement the guidelines for aggregating and reporting data, once these are established. Data for individuals, however, will be reported by the Department following the schedule set by OMB (January 2003). Maintenance at the school district level of complete information will be needed, therefore, to meet whatever requirements are eventually identified. While schools or school districts may wish to allow other more specific options than those included in the Handbook, new options should be designed in such a way that they can later be re-grouped or collapsed into the options included here, or as required by current law. (See appendix D for further explanation of Directive 15 and OMB's work.)

In chapter 5, entities and data elements are combined to describe how this handbook may be used to set up a staff accounting system. This chapter also provides suggested data element types and field lengths for readers creating an automated staff accounting system. In some cases, an assumption was made that coded options would be used instead of an open-ended response. However, the reader may choose not to use the suggested options.

## Contents of the Handbook

This handbook contains both general information about data collection activities and individual staff accounting systems, and specific information about what might be included in a staff record.

Chapter 1, "Introduction," provides an introduction to the Handbook and discusses the need for a common language and the potential technology offers in maximizing the usefulness of information obtained by education data collection efforts.

Chapter 2, "The Handbook," describes the purposes and the role of the Handbook, its contents and potential uses, and recognized limitations. Listings of other related documents that could be useful are also included. In anticipation of future updates, a description of the process for implementing suggested changes has been included.

Chapter 3, "Building an Automated Staff Accounting System," describes a process for developing a staff accounting system, and the principles related to the development of such a system. Included are suggestions for policy development regarding the design of a staff accounting system, the kinds of data that should be collected, the updating of these data, the uses of the data, and the need to control access to individual staff records.

Chapter 4, "Definition of Terms," contains a comprehensive listing of data terms considered important to the management of schools, the appropriate assignment of personnel, and the provision of services and benefits to staff. Each entity listed refers to something, or someone, about which data should be maintained. Each data element refers to a particular aspect of staff data for which some need was perceived within the school system.

A "best practice" definition is included for each entity and data element. A data element's definition may include options or classifications that describe the term, and which can be used as codes within a staff accounting system. In addition, potential entity uses are listed for each data element.

Chapter 5, "Applications of the Handbook," is, for the most part, dedicated to the design of a potential staff accounting system that joins entities with data elements to describe how data could be maintained. A table is also provided with information about data element type and field length, attributes that could be useful to readers designing a data collection system, a survey, or a reporting format.

The glossary defines selected staff-related terms that are used in the text, but not defined in earlier chapters, as well as other important terms in staff data management. A detailed Index is also included for easy reference. Following the Glossary and Index are 13 appendices with important supplemental information. The appendices include comprehensive lists of coding options for some of the data elements in chapter 4. Included are code designations for states and outlying areas, countries, languages, occupational groupings, medical conditions and treatments, and listings of federal education programs and the names of those who contributed to the development of this revision.

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Users of the 1995 version of the *Staff Data Handbook* should note that Section B, Educational Background, and Section C, Professional Development, have been combined.

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## Updates to the Handbook

Beginning with the revised version of this handbook, NCES has instituted a process for revising the Handbook on an as-needed basis. The expectation is that major revisions suggested in the four to five years following publication will be minimal, and a complete revision will not be needed for five or more years. To handle minor revisions or additions as they arise, the following procedures have been developed.

In order to identify needed changes or additions, NCES will compile suggestions and questions sent by letter or e-mail over the course of a year. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education staff will be contacted to determine if there are changes in reporting requirements that affect the handbook data elements. Suggestions and questions will be posted on the National Forum on Education Statistics listserv around December 1, at least two months before the Forum's Winter meeting. At the Winter meeting, a group of Forum members will consider the proposed changes and decide which to include in the new revision.

Once the changes have been determined, the Government Printing Office will be provided substitute pages for inclusion with the printed version. Changes and revised pages will also be made available electronically on the Handbook Homepage. Visitors to the site should be able to print the revised pages as they look in the printed document. In this and subsequent versions of the Handbook, readers will be encouraged to visit the NCES web site at **http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/staffhb** to obtain any recent revisions.

Suggestions for revisions can be submitted to NCES in the following ways:

1. Go to the Handbook web site (**http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/staffhb**) and follow the e-mail link for submitting changes.
2. Mail suggestions to:

<div align="center">

Staff Handbook Changes
c/o Beth Young
National Center for Education Statistics
U.S. Department of Education
1990 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006-5651

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# Chapter 3

# BUILDING A STAFF ACCOUNTING SYSTEM

## Introduction

Information is needed about staff members from the time they enter into employment or service with a school, school district, or other education organization until they retire or depart. For example, a file is created as soon as a teacher applies for certification or licensure from a state licensing agency. Such a file generally lists completed coursework, including apprenticeships or student teaching, and recommendations for certification/licensure. As a part of the hiring process, the local administrative unit may request information about the applicant's background, such as home address, social security number, license, content areas of certification, experience, and other basic information. When the individual is assigned to a school, other information about that assignment, such as grade levels, courses taught, and school location is added to the record. In addition, the payroll office keeps information about the staff member's insurance plan(s), beneficiary, withholding requirements, and other data that are needed to ensure the staff member is paid and taxes and insurance are covered. Other information about the staff member might be kept at the assignment site, including an Emergency Contact name, extracurricular sponsorships, attendance, and appraisal ratings. Retirement systems for the state or school district also maintain files that might include the staff member's expected date of retirement, years of experience, and other related information. Although the exact content may differ, the types of data files mentioned above are generally kept for both teaching and non-teaching staff, including both licensed and unlicensed personnel.

Efficiency suggests that relevant information should be collected once and subsequently made available to all authorized users through an automated, distributed database arrangement or a consolidated computer database. For example, a staff member's address should be entered once into the system, and then accessed by anyone within the organization with a need to mail something to the staff member. Using standard terminology when developing a database can ensure that information will be correctly interpreted and useful. Staff records serve many purposes; but whatever their content, use, or storage medium, a staff record is basically a collection of information about a staff member.

A well-designed, automated staff accounting system yields many benefits, including the ability to extract information about individual staff members, schools, programs, and school systems for use in decision making. A second benefit may occur when staff records are added to an overall management information system that includes data about students, facilities, resources, curriculum materials, and budgeting for the school or school district. Ease of use means that authorized personnel can accomplish management activities more efficiently, especially if the data are comparable. In such an arrangement, staff accounting systems can play a key role in the overall functioning of the school system. In addition, such a system allows for more sophisticated analyses to be conducted, promoting improvement in the way instructional and other types of services are provided to students. With the growing number of schools and local education agencies, including those administered by private management companies, it is increasingly important to develop well-designed mechanisms for collecting accurate and timely information that can be used for policymaking.

Many state education agencies are beginning to collect more information about educators currently employed in school districts across the state. In conjunction with student and finance data provided by schools and districts, this staffing information can be used to evaluate the quality of the provided instruction, and to hold schools and districts accountable for student learning. As a result, a more efficient way is needed to move data from schools and districts to state education agencies, so as to make the data readily available for state-level policymaking. If the data are to be useful, standard definitions for data elements are essential.

## Description of a Staff Record

A staff record is, by definition, any recorded information about a staff member. Staff records can be described in terms of content (e.g., assignment information), use (e.g., ensuring that staff hold any required credentials), or by how they are stored (e.g., a computer disk). Staff records may be used for many purposes, including monitoring compliance with state laws and regulations; identifying staffing needs; scheduling teachers into classes; producing